

seeking shelter by MissAtomicBomb (mrs_nerimon)

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Summary:

Jonathan and Eleven get to know each other over their favorite thing: breakfast.

seeking shelter

Author's Note:

my soft kids being soft siblings is what i deserve in
s3

It's 7:30 am on a Sunday, and Jonathan is surprised to find he's not the only one up.

He enters the kitchen and she's sitting at their little table, Eleven-Jane-El, a half empty bowl of cereal in front of her and Will's latest drawing drifting above her head.

"Hello." Jonathan leans against the doorway. She turns her head and the paper falls, floating down to the table so gently he wonders if she did it herself, even as she's focused on him.

"Hello." She repeats. She brushes her hair behind her ears, and it's so much longer than the last time he saw her, reaching almost her shoulders now.

She always accompanies Hopper when he comes to spend the night. Which, his mother assures him, is only for protection, and nothing else at all so *stop making that face young man*. Yeah, sure, *definitely*. That's why he helps Nancy sneak in his bedroom window after midnight most nights. So she can protect him.

Usually Eleven will spend the night with Will in a living room fort, or even camped out in his bedroom. They share a bond Jonathan doesn't think he'll ever be able to understand, but he's glad for the way Will is able to talk to her. Like maybe she's the only one who really gets it.

He's been there whenever she's spent the night before, but he can't recall them ever having a one on one conversation. And as she sits here blinking at him, Jonathan suddenly realizes he's not sure how to act around her. He's good with kids but she's much more than that, in every single way.

The girl doesn't seem to notice his indecision. She stands up briskly

and crosses to the fridge. The freezer door opens and she points a finger inside, turning back to regard him with a raised eyebrow.

"You're out." She says.

"What?"

"Eggos." She lets the door fall shut again with some force. "There are no more for breakfast."

Of course Hopper lets her eat that crap every day. He's so terrible at saying no to her, he probably serves it for dinner half the time too.

"No, sorry." Jonathan steps to the table and collects her bowl, dumping it in the sink. "But I usually make breakfast, if you want. I can make you something."

He says that like it isn't the only thing that makes him feel even slightly useful anymore.

El considers this a moment, and then nods.

"Okay," she slips a little closer to him. "What is it?"

They don't have a lot in the cabinet, and once he gets paid this week he'll go shopping. Maybe he can even pick up some Eggos for next time she's here. But for now, there's always the breakfast staple.

"Pancakes." He opens the cabinet to grab a frying pan, and as he's rocked on his tip toes to reach for it on the top shelf, it raises up and slides down to slip easily into his hand.

Jonathan peeks over his shoulder, to where El is still standing by the fridge. She wipes at her nose reflexively, but there's nothing there.

"Thanks." He mumbles, and she gives him the soft smile again.

"What is pancakes?" She asks.

He grabs the mix off the top of the fridge and pours some into a bowl. She comes closer to watch him stir, and a finger darts out instantly, slipping into the batter and out before he even realizes it.

She sticks it in her mouth and her eyebrows furrow together.

"They won't taste right yet." He assures her, and she nods.

"Not good." She frowns, and then catches his eye. "Yet."

He smiles at that.

"Hopper's never made you these?"

The girl wrinkles her nose.

"We have *Eggos*." She tells him again, speaking slowly like she's explaining something to a very little kid.

"Right," Jonathan pours the first one into the pan and she darts under his arm to watch closer. "They'll be good, I promise."

Eleven tilts her head as she watches the batter bubble. She doesn't bother to fill the silence; no ones taught her to feel uncomfortable in it yet.

When they're done, she hurries to the table and takes her seat again. He sets the finished plate in front of her, steam rising from the stack. She eyes it warily.

"They're good." He assures her again, and she picks up a fork.

"You like syrup? Or butter? Or, uh, we have jam?"

"All." She says plainly. Jonathan cracks a smile.

"Right, yeah, me too." He digs out the jar of strawberry jam, a tub of butter, and a mostly empty syrup bottle from the fridge.

He sets all three in front of her, and she reaches first for the jam. She can't twist it off with her hand, so she sets it back on the table and the lid pops on its own.

Jonathan comes around to the other side and sits across from her. He's never really experienced her powers like this, up close and personal and doing menial things. It's weird, for sure, but it's also

incredibly awesome.

"El-" he cuts himself off, swallowing the beginning of a name that she might not even claim anymore.

She spreads the jelly across her pancakes and acknowledges him with a hum.

"What do you like to be called?" He asks, suddenly realizing he hasn't a clue.

Hopper calls her Jane. *Jane, where'd I leave my jacket? Jane, don't put your feet on the dashboard. Jane, say goodbye to the Byers.* He's heard Nancy call her that too, even once or twice from his mom.

Will and the boys and Max still call her El. Eleven, occasionally, but almost always El. *El, check this out! El, we're going to the arcade. El, can you make the skateboard fly?*

Jonathan doesn't know where he falls. He didn't know her before they found out her real name. He supposes he still doesn't truly know her much at all. But he wants to, he thinks.

She's been thinking for a long moment. Finally, she shrugs her shoulders and takes another big bite.

"You don't care?" He asks.

"Why?" She shakes her head. "No."

"Well, uh, my dad used to call me Jonny. And I hated it." He's never said that part out loud, he realizes. Certainly not to Lonnie. "I don't want to call you something you don't like."

She narrows her eyes at him, sizing him up.

"Okay." She agrees. She swirls her fork around in the jam as she thinks, collecting the liquid along the edges of the plate.

Jonathan stabs at his own food as she contemplates. They *are* good. Maybe not Eggo good, but still.

"El," she ultimately decides, pointing her sticky utensil up at him. "You call me that."

Like the boys, he thinks. He doesn't know if that's good or bad, that she lumps him in with them. It has to be good, right? She loves them all, that's clear enough. He wonders if she'll ever think of him the way she thinks of them. If she will ever see him as a friend. A brother, maybe, if he's good enough at it.

She scrapes the last of the jelly off of her plate, then reaches for the bottle again.

"Good." She declares, and Jonathan smiles.

"Pancakes are the morning-after sleepover food." He thinks on that. "At least, that's what I heard. Never went to many."

El pauses in her task of spooning jelly straight from the jar into her mouth.

"Sleepover?" She repeats around a mouthful.

"When you stay the night at a friend's house." He thumbs at the doorway. "Like, when you stay here with Will."

She nods.

"Sleepover." She sits up a little straighter in her chair, raising her eyes to look at him again. She has a focused kind of stare, but it's not intrusive. It doesn't bother him the way it would with anyone else.

Jonathan watches her back, and she doesn't seem bothered by that either.

She sets her utensils down on her plate, and leans forward a bit, like she's about to tell him something important.

"When Hopper and Joyce get married-"

Jonathan nearly chokes on his milk, but she keeps talking like nothing's amiss.

"-will I always sleepover here?"

"Married?" He coughs, and she nods down at her plate.

"When you really like someone, you want to be with them forever. You move in together and you get married."

She thinks he doesn't understand the word. Jonathan feels a tug in his chest instantly.

"Oh, yeah, I just meant- Who told you they were getting married?"

"Mike."

Of course.

"You shouldn't believe everything he says."

This makes her frown, and he immediately regrets it.

"I mean, he's not always... Sometimes he's just kidding."

"I know that." She rolls her eyes, a move he's sure she picked up from Lucas or Dustin. "I'm not stupid."

Jonathan looks down. What was it Will had said? That they babied him? He's sure El feels the same, like people walk on eggshells around her, treat her like she's much younger than she is.

"Of course you're not."

She picks up her fork again.

"Mike said you and Nancy are going to get married. But that was kidding."

Jonathan feels the corner of his mouth tilt up.

"You're not old enough." She follows up, just in case he was getting any ideas.

"Right."

He watches her finish off the meal, his own stack abandoned with a few bites. Once she's done, she stands up and collects her plate, then comes around for his too.

"Done?" She asks, and he nods. She takes them both and sets his on the counter, and hers in the sink.

"You should come back with us." She turns back to him, and he suddenly realizes how tall she is, standing up next to the wall where he and Will used to get measured. "You make better breakfast than Hop."

That makes him feel the same pull in his chest, in the place that used to only be for Will and his mom. Now it feels like it's no longer a secret, there's too many of them he's trying to hold close. Maybe this whole guarded and defensive thing was never gonna work out.

"Thanks, but I don't think there's room for me out there."

El shrugs. She wraps her arms around herself, looking around their kitchen. Her eyes linger on his mom's keys on the counter, the camera strap hanging off the chair, Will's drawings on the fridge.

"I'll come back here soon. Right?"

Jonathan nods.

"Of course." He's sure Hopper will be back sooner rather than later, even if he really, *really* doesn't want to think about what that's starting to mean.

"Good." She smiles right at him, and with the sun lighting up the window behind her, he wishes he had his camera on him.

El's watching him again with her close focused gaze.

He stands up from the table and brushes the remains of the mix off his shirt, before looking back at her. It's nearly 8, the rest of the house is asleep. They've got some time to kill.

"What kind of music do you like?"

